

in New York Harbor, where he took charge of building fortifications.

**The Mexican War.** When war broke out between the United States and Mexico in 1846, the army sent Lee to Texas as assistant engineer under General John E. Wool. All his superior officers, especially General Winfield Scott, were impressed with the brave young Virginian.

Early in the war, Lee supervised the construction of bridges for Wool's march toward the Mexican border. He then did excellent work on scouting trips. He was shortly transferred to General Winfield Scott's command and took part in the capture of Veracruz. Lee's engineering skill made it possible for American troops to cross the difficult mountain passes on the way to the capital. During the march to Mexico City, Lee was promoted to brevet major, then to brevet lieutenant colonel. He became a brevet colonel before the war ended.

The official report praised Lee highly. Scott declared that his "success in Mexico was largely due to the skill, valor, and undaunted courage of Robert E. Lee . . . the greatest military genius in America."

**Superintendent of West Point.** After three years at Fort Carroll in Baltimore harbor, Lee became superintendent of West Point in 1852. He would have preferred duty in the field, instead of at a desk, but assumed his post without complaint. During his three years at West Point, he improved the buildings and the courses, and spent much time with the cadets. One cadet, "Jeb" Stuart, later served as one of Lee's best cavalry officers. Lee won a reputation during his service there as a fair and kind superintendent.

**Other Duties.** In 1855, Lee became a lieutenant colonel of cavalry and was assigned to duty on the Texas frontier. There he helped protect settlers from attacks by the Apache and Comanche Indians. Once again he proved to be an excellent soldier and organizer. But these were not happy years for Lee. He did not like to be away from his family for long periods of time,



Oil painting on canvas (1904) by Theodore Peale. Lee Chapel, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.

**General Robert E. Lee** commanded the Confederate Army during the Civil War. He ranks among the nation's greatest heroes.

particularly because of Mrs. Lee, who was becoming an invalid. Lee came home to see her as often as possible. He happened to be in Washington at the time of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry in 1859, and was sent there to arrest Brown and restore order. He accomplished this task quickly and with little loss of life, then returned to his regiment in Texas. When Texas seceded

Brown's Raid.



Lee posed astride his famous horse, Traveller, which he rode throughout the Civil War. The famous Southern general was known for his dignity and calm even in times of stress.